



Eddie A. Perez
Mayor



The Trust for Public Land, City of Hartford Collaborate on Parks Project

(May 19, 2006 Hartford, CT) – Over one hundred years ago, renowned landscape architect and Hartford native Frederick Law Olmsted created a world-class system of parks in the city. Today, the City of Hartford announced that The Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national nonprofit conservation organization, would collaborate with the Mayor, city officials and park advocates, to revitalize the city’s parks and green spaces. Their goals will be improving access, safety, programming, funding, and management. TPL has worked with many other cities across the country on creating playgrounds and improving parks, including New York, Newark, Stamford, Atlanta, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

Mayor Eddie A. Perez, who forged the partnership with TPL, said, “We are delighted to announce Hartford’s new partnership with The Trust for Public Land and are confident that TPL will bring new ideas and resources to make our city’s grand and historic parks and their surrounding neighborhoods better places to live, work, learn and play. It is important that we forge ahead with progressive thinking without compromising the beautiful history that unfolds each and every day in our parks.”

TPL is working closely with the Mayor’s office and city departments, and is also consulting with a wider range of community groups and friends of Hartford parks, including the Knox Parks Foundation, Riverfront Recapture, and the Hartford Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission.

Some of the goals of the multi-year project are to:

- **Assess the city’s open space needs and desires, including existing conditions and future potential;**
- **Analyze Hartford in comparison to similar cities, looking for practices and strategies which could improve park management and usage;**
- **Outline a balance of natural open space, recreational use, and historic landmark parks within the city limits;**
- **Research new mechanisms to pay for existing parks and to finance park improvements and programming;**
- **Engage youth in park planning and enhance their park utilization;**
- **Focus on specific park enhancement opportunities, including the future use of Batterson Park.**

According to David Queeley, the New England Director of TPL’s Parks for People program, “Our first step is to engage in discussions with the groups who have an interest in the city’s park system. By engaging a broad group of partners in this effort, we hope to build a solid foundation to achieve long-term revitalization of the parks system. Hartford has a committed staff and a wide array of excellent parks, youth, and neighborhood organizations. Our role will be to see if there are new best practices we can bring to the city to leverage the good work that is already being accomplished.”

Jack Hale, Executive Director of the Knox Parks Foundation, said, "The fact that TPL is coming to Hartford is a real indicator of the underlying quality of our historic park system as well as our current need to make it function as a true community asset. If anyone can help Hartford's parks meet their true potential, TPL can do it."

One tool TPL will offer the city is called "greenprinting." With this method, TPL applies Geographic Information System (GIS) computer modeling to generate clear, readable maps of where parks, gardens, playgrounds and other open spaces are lacking in neighborhoods, and how to connect existing and potential open spaces. The greenprinting process thus helps to identify areas that offer the highest potential for future parks and recreation activity.

Bill Young, head of Hartford's citizen-based Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission, which is also participating in the initiative, said, "Hartford's partnership with TPL is another very important step in moving the City toward having an excellent urban park system for the 21st century -- for all our citizens, for those who work here, and for those visiting. We are very fortunate to have inherited a wonderful 19th-century parks vision and superb parklands. Now the pieces are really beginning to come together, with public, non-profit and private partners, to put in place a superb park system."

A number of local corporate and private foundations have already stepped forward to fund the first phase of this project, including United Technologies Corporation (UTC), ING, The Phoenix Foundation, and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.

Krista Pilot, Director of Community Affairs at UTC, said, "We have supported TPL's work proudly for the past seven years as part of our Sustainable Cities grant program, and we are particularly pleased that the Parks for People program will benefit the Hartford community where UTC is headquartered. In 2005 alone, we committed more than \$800,000 to environmental projects in the communities where we work and live, and TPL's efforts to conserve open space are a great example of our shared commitment."

"As new and revitalized buildings spring up all over our Capitol City, it's as important to preserve our beautiful and historic parks and create new opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy the outdoors," said Richard Porth, vice president for grant making at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. "We see this as a wonderful opportunity to partner with the City of Hartford, the Trust for Public Land, and local organizations to do just that."

The Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national nonprofit organization with its Connecticut State Office in New Haven, works with others to conserve land for people to enjoy as working landscapes, parks, gardens, and natural areas, ensuring livable communities for generations to come.

One of TPL's key programs is Parks for People, which works in cities to ensure that everyone, especially every child, has close-to-home access to a park, playground or natural area. TPL's Parks for People program is currently working in Stamford to improve parks along the Mill River, creating a 26-acre greenway downtown; and in Providence to create new parks along the 9.5-acre Woonasquatucket River Greenway.

To date, TPL has protected more than 4,000 acres of open space, watershed land, working farms and forestland, and historic resources in more than 50 communities across Connecticut. For more information, please visit www.tpl.org/connecticut.

Contacts: David Queeley, Parks for People New England Director, 617-367-6200 ext. 316
Tim Northrop, Connecticut State Director, 203-777-7367 ext. 3
Sarah Barr, Dir. of Communications for Mayor Perez (860) 522-4888 ext. 6217